

VZCZCXYZ0006  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMS #0782/01 1361133  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 161133Z MAY 06  
FM AMEMBASSY MUSCAT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6531

UNCLAS MUSCAT 000782

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DRL/IL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [APER](#) [ELAB](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: EMBASSY MUSCAT NOMINATION FOR LABOR DIPLOMACY AWARD

REF: A. SECSTATE 61595

- [1](#)B. SECSTATE 67526
- [1](#)C. MUSCAT 588
- [1](#)D. 05 MUSCAT 766
- [1](#)E. 05 MUSCAT 209

[1](#)1. U.S. Embassy Muscat is pleased to nominate Pol/LaborOff Cynthia L. Plath for the 2006 Labor Diplomacy Officer of the Year Award in recognition of her outstanding support of USG labor and human rights policies in Oman. Her dedication, initiative and responsive reporting were invaluable to the successful negotiation of the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and have built a solid foundation for future cooperation with Oman's growing labor union movement.

-----  
US-Oman Free Trade Agreement  
-----

[1](#)2. Ms. Plath's insightful, analytical and proactive reporting of labor trends and developments have been integral to the U.S. Trade Representative's (USTR) successful negotiation of the FTA and in implementing the President's vision of the Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA). Her prolific reporting has been instrumental in the Department of Labor's (DOL) ability to draft relevant and needs-based proposals for technical assistance, and the Embassy's ability to respond to ongoing Congressional requests for labor information (reftel D). Assistant United States Trade Representative (A/USTR) for Labor Lewis Karesh was so pleased with Ms. Plath's work throughout the laborious FTA negotiations that, in a letter to the U.S. Ambassador to Oman, he said, "Cynthia has been a tremendous resource on Omani labor law, providing information to respond to Congressional inquiries and support ratification of the FTA."

[1](#)3. Her extensive reporting and detailed policy work with the Under Secretary of the Ministry of Manpower was likewise recognized by the Department of Labor (reftel B) in a glowing assessment. "Ms. Plath has provided a steady and needed stream of information and data about Omani labor law, conditions, and procedures necessary for the completion of the Department of labor-authored "Meaningful Labor Rights Report" mandated by Congress. Cynthia has responded very promptly and in detail to our numerous requests for information.... She's made a diligent effort to track down data and clarify ambiguities in our understanding of Omani labor laws and practice. The Department of Labor is extremely grateful for her excellent contributions."

-----  
MEPI Regional Labor Dialogue  
-----

[1](#)4. One of the Embassy's most significant achievements of 2005 was the hugely successful Middle East Partnership

Initiative (MEPI) Regional Labor Dialogue. In direct support of Embassy Muscat's Mission Performance Plan and advancement of U.S. foreign policy, the Dialogue focused attention on the role of labor in a democracy and raised awareness of the importance of meeting international labor standards.

15. In preparing for this unprecedented conference in Oman, Ms. Plath worked tirelessly with a number of agencies to organize and develop agendas and guest lists, manage travel logistics for 200 guests and nine ministers of labor, negotiate hotel savings of over \$10,000, arrange policy meetings with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) labor ministers, attend strategy planning sessions with the International Labor Organization (ILO), and facilitate private sector meetings with some of Oman's most influential businessmen and labor committee representatives. She skillfully managed the competing interests and simultaneous visits of multiple government agencies while working around the clock managing an intra-agency team responsible for organizing presentations, assembling over 200 binders, greeting participants, setting up multiple conference facilities, facilitating over 8,000 pages of photocopying, and working with hotel staff around the clock to manage often overlooked details such as table placement, audio-visual services, catering and rooms.

-----  
Innovative Problem Solver  
-----

16. Ms. Plath has been stalwart in promoting U.S. labor policy and has significantly enhanced USG understanding of Omani labor practices through numerous initiatives, including hosting regular lunches and meetings with labor contacts, committee members, and Ministry of Manpower (MOM) officials, as well as by hosting roundtable discussions with the private sector and performing outreach to new unions. Ms. Plath regularly nominates candidates to participate in State-sponsored events, as well as regional events hosted by NGOs such as the Solidarity Center. She has nominated six candidates for the International Visitor Program and was successful in convincing the MOM to accept a U.S. Fulbright scholar to assist in policy research and implementation of recent ILO reform commitments.

-----  
"Honorary" Union Member  
-----

17. It was through Ms. Plath's persistent outreach and initiative that Embassy Muscat has developed the most extensive and accessible contacts in the labor movement in Oman. Her patient and sustained cultivation of contacts at the MOM has resulted in unparalleled access to MOM proceedings, plans, and staff, most notable of which has included her regular meetings with the Under Secretary for Labor. This relationship has been invaluable in promoting international labor standards required to pass the FTA and in obtaining specific documents and unpublished material, such as draft Occupational Safety and Health Regulations. More importantly, her relationship with MOM officials has made it easier to cut through bureaucratic obstacles and facilitate quick and easy access for policy discussion, including for high-level visitors such as a Deputy Under Secretary of Labor and two Assistant U.S. Trade Representatives.

18. Ms. Plath spends a considerable amount of time developing contacts and meeting with union representatives throughout Oman. These confidences have resulted in specific and responsive reporting to the MEPI office (NEA/PI), the Department of Labor and USTR, and exchanges with the ILO on the latest labor developments (reftel C). Her dedicated support of the growing union movement in Oman has been instrumental in securing long-awaited technical assistance, including a recent MEPI small grant submission to provide voter outreach and education for upcoming union elections. Moreover, her regular outreach to labor attaches from third-country embassies helps keep the Embassy abreast of

developments within the expatriate labor force and has resulted in more comprehensive human rights, labor, and trafficking in person reporting (reftel E).

19. This Embassy joins the Department of Labor, USTR, and the State Department in our pride over Ms. Plath's accomplishments, which we feel amply merits her selection as Labor Diplomacy Officer of the Year. This nomination has been enthusiastically endorsed by the Embassy's Awards Committee and approved by the Ambassador.  
GRAPPO